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ABSTRACT

The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, and students with an overview of results from the June 1998 administration of the Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination given in Alberta, Canada. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction report. The report first explains that this examination consists of two parts: a multiple-choice section worth 70%, and a written-response section worth 30% of the total examination mark. The report states that overall student achievement in Social Studies 30 was satisfactory. Out of 10,203 students who wrote the examination 94.7% achieved the acceptable standard and 18.1% of the students achieved the standard of excellence. The report then focuses on explanations and samples of the multiple choice and written response tests that were used in this study. (BT)

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Social Studies 30, Diploma Examination Results. Examiners' Report for June 1998.

Alberta Dept. of Education, Edmonton. Student Evaluation Branch.

SO 029 961

C. Andrews

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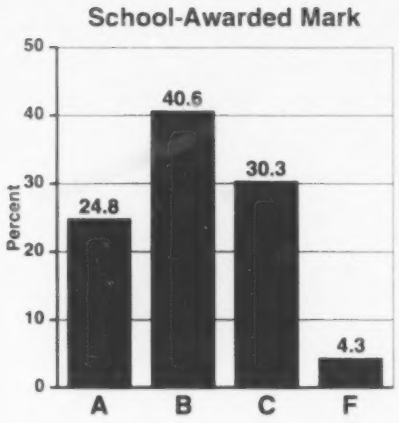
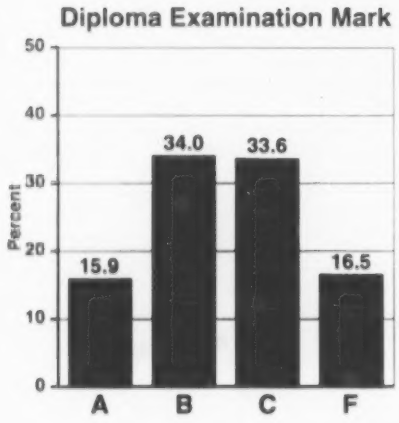
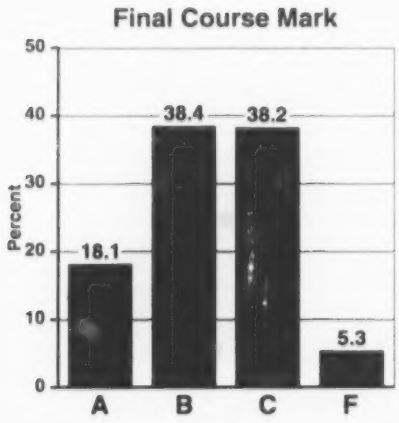
Social Studies 30

Diploma Examination Results
Examiners' Report for June 1998







The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, and students with an overview of results from the June 1998 administration of the Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that have been provided electronically to schools and school jurisdiction offices. A provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined January, April, June, and August results is made available annually.

Description of the Examination

The Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a multiple-choice section worth 70% and a written-response section worth 30% of the total examination mark.

Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 10 203 students who wrote the June 1998 examination.

- 94.7% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 18.1% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Overall, student achievement in Social Studies 30 was satisfactory. Students demonstrated a good understanding of Social Studies knowledge. In composing their essays, many students showed a clear understanding of the issue under discussion, as well as competent skill in developing and organizing an argumentative paper. Students are focussing more than ever on planning, editing, and proofreading their written work. A wide range of historical and contemporary examples are used by students as evidence to support their positions.

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 69.5%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 64.3%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 67.2%.

Part A: Multiple Choice

Examination Blueprint

Part A: Multiple Choice has a value of 70 marks, one mark for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: by the curricular content area (topic) being tested and by the knowledge and skill objectives required to answer the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in June 1998 according to these classifications.

All questions on the diploma examination require students to demonstrate knowledge of social studies content and to apply social studies skills to that knowledge base. The reporting categories below define the general types of questions that appear on the examination and the categories for which information is reported.

		Question Classification by Topic		Total Questions
		Topic A: Political and Economic Systems Knowledge and application of facts, concepts, and generalizations related to the world's political and economic systems as outlined in the *Program of Studies*.	**Topic B: Global Interaction in the 20th Century** Knowledge and application of facts, concepts, and generalizations related to the interaction of nations since 1918 as outlined in the *Program of Studies*.	
Question Classification by Knowledge and Skill Objectives	**Comprehension of Information and Ideas** These questions require students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of generalizations, key concepts, and facts related to social studies content.	1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15, 18, 19, 26, 29, 30, 33	36, 37, 38, 44, 47, 48, 50, 51, 60, 61, 66, 70	24
	Interpretation and Analysis of Information and Ideas These questions require students to demonstrate their knowledge of social studies content by interpreting and analyzing information and ideas.	2, 3, 4, 12, 20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 34, 35	39, 43, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 62, 67, 68	22
	Synthesis and Evaluation of Information and Ideas These questions require students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge of social studies content by synthesizing information and ideas, and evaluating their accuracy and worth.	5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 22, 23, 27, 31, 32	40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 49, 56, 57, 63, 64, 65, 69	24
	Total Questions	**35**	**35**	**70**

*Subtest Results**

Results are reported in average raw scores.

Total Part A: 46.5 out of 70

by Topic

- Political and Economic Systems: 22.4 out of 35
- Global Interaction in the 20th Century: 24.1 out of 35

by Knowledge and Skill Objectives

- Comprehension of Information and Ideas: 16.2 out of 24
- Interpretation and Analysis of Information and Ideas: 15.0 out or 22
- Synthesis and Evaluation of Information and Ideas: 15.3 out of 24

*Readers are cautioned **not** to compare subtest results because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school results.

Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	B	88.6
2	C	76.5
3	B	76.8
4	A	83.1
5	C	63.1
6	B	48.4
7	D	67.5
8	C	71.5
9	C	75.1
10	B	65.2
11	C	51.8
12	A	78.0
13	A	45.8
14	D	61.4
15	B	73.7
16	D	76.1
17	C	74.3
18	B	76.3
19	C	41.3
20	B	65.1
21	D	41.8
22	D	33.1
23	A	77.1
24	C	48.5
25	C	70.2
26	B	65.6
27	A	76.4
28	A	49.5
29	C	71.9
30	B	79.9
31	D	41.9
32	A	74.5
33	C	39.7
34	A	53.5
35	B	59.4
36	A	67.6
37	D	54.5
38	C	78.8
39	D	68.8
40	A	52.7
41	B	66.7
42	D	65.9
43	C	64.8
44	D	51.3
45	C	66.2
46	B	59.5
47	A	83.5
48	B	51.1
49	C	77.3
50	A	70.6
51	A	84.1
52	B	76.3
53	A	64.4
54	D	70.9
55	D	75.4
56	A	64.0
57	C	56.0
58	B	77.8
59	D	52.9
60	C	75.2
61	C	60.9
62	B	80.0
63	C	68.6
64	B	80.5
65	D	72.8
66	A	61.2
67	A	78.0
68	D	89.8
69	C	68.6
70	D	74.2

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results with the provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examiners' Comments

The multiple-choice section of the examination requires students to go beyond simply recalling information and to apply their knowledge and thinking skills. Students must demonstrate that they understand social studies concepts; that they comprehend historical, political, and economic relationships; and that they can interpret and evaluate social studies information and ideas.

During the marking session, markers were asked whether the standards embedded in the multiple-choice questions were appropriate and fair. These teachers generally concurred that this section of the examination set an appropriately demanding standard of achievement for graduating Social Studies 30 students. They found the data sources relevant and engaging and the questions challenging but fair.

The following table gives results for six questions selected from the examination. The table shows the percentage of students, in five groups, that answered each question correctly. The comments on pages 4 and 5 address some of the decisions that students may have made and some of the skills they may have used to answer these questions correctly.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

	Question Number					
Student Group	**10**	**11**	**28**	**35**	**45**	**46**
All students	65.2	51.8	49.5	59.4	66.2	59.5
Students achieving the *standard of excellence* (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	94.5	87.3	56.2	90.3	95.6	85.8
Students achieving the *acceptable standard* who received marks between 65% and 79%, or B, on the whole examination	77.1	65.6	48.5	72.0	82.8	67.7
Students achieving the *acceptable standard* who received marks between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination	54.1	37.5	48.0	47.8	54.4	50.5
Students who have not achieved the *acceptable standard* (49% or less) on the whole examination	34.7	18.1	48.4	27.1	27.7	35.5

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Use the following diagram to answer questions 10 and 11.

10. Which of the following conclusions could be drawn from this diagram?

- **A.** Economic thinking has become more polarized over time.
- * **B.** Circumstances have moderated economic positions over time.
- **C.** The concept of ideologies is less applicable in the world today.
- **D.** Marx and Smith shared fundamentally similar ideological outlooks.

11. The sequence and cumulative effect illustrated on the left side of the diagram can be attributed to

- **A.** the success of industrialization through central planning
- **B.** the use of dictatorial methods to achieve democratic reform
- * **C.** a decline in economic performance and worker productivity
- **D.** a failure of successive Soviet governments to collectivize agriculture

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Use the following quotation to answer questions 27 and 28.

The nationalization of the great masses can never take place by way of half measures, by a weak emphasis upon a so-called objective viewpoint, but by a ruthless and fanatical one-sided orientation as to the goal at which to be aimed.

—Adolf Hitler

28. Hitler's reference to "a ruthless and fanatical one-sided orientation" alludes to his use of

- * **A.** propaganda
- **B.** party purges
- **C.** scapegoating
- **D.** rigged elections

Questions 10 and 11 comprised a set of two questions based on a diagram showing a series of political and economic developments that have emerged since Karl Marx and Adam Smith first proposed their ideas. Both questions 10 and 11 are classified as Synthesis/Evaluation questions on Topic A.

To answer Question 10 correctly, students had to recognize that the relationships among the details illustrated in the diagram collectively indicate a historical reversal in direction and principle, and they had to infer a generalized reason for this reversal. Changing conditions throughout the 19th and 20th centuries have profoundly (and ironically) affected the course of communist and capitalist thought and ideology. Students did not find the question difficult: 65.2% of all students and 94.5% of those achieving the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Question 11 required students to focus on the developments shown in one section of the diagram. They then had to determine which leading factor contributed to the result shown. Students found this question somewhat difficult, with 51.8% of all students answering correctly. However, 87.3% of those students achieving the standard of excellence chose the correct response. A closer statistical review of this question reveals that of the total number of females who answered question 11, only 44.5% answered correctly compared with 59.8% of males.

Question 28 required students to identify a technique of dictatorship as it applied to a specific purpose outlined in a quotation by Adolf Hitler. In this instance, that the masses must be subjected continuously to the party ideology. Question 28 is classified as an Interpretation/Analysis question on Topic A.

This question proved to be difficult, with only 49.5% of all students answering correctly. The fact that 26.1% of all students concluded that Hitler's reference related to party purges suggests that these students may have placed too much emphasis on the word "ruthless" or that they may not have carefully read the quotation for crucial information.

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Use the following passage to answer questions 34 and 35.

> If democracy is to survive the shrinking of the world and the assaults of a hostile modernity, it will have to rediscover its multiple voices and give to citizens once again the power to speak, to decide, and to act; for in the end human freedom will be found not in caverns of private solitude but in the noisy assemblies where women and men meet daily as citizens and discover in each others' talk the consolation of a common humanity.

—from *The Struggle For Democracy*

35. Democracy, as envisioned by the author of the passage, closely resembles

- **A.** the congressional system of government used in the United States
- * **B.** a system of direct democracy similar in theory to that used in ancient Athens
- **C.** the parliamentary system of government used in the United Kingdom
- **D.** a system of proportional representation similar in theory to that used in Sweden

Question 35 was one of a set of two questions based on a short passage that describes a central challenge to modern democracy and how this challenge should be met. Question 35 is classified as an Interpretation/Analysis question on Topic A.

This question required students to interpret the writer's point of view regarding the desirable nature of democracy and to recognize the similarity of this model to that practised in ancient Athens. Students found this question somewhat difficult with 59.4% of all students answering correctly (90.3% of those students who achieved the standard of excellence chose correctly). That 15.4% of all students determined that the description referred to the congressional American system and that 19.1% of all students concluded that the description referred to proportional representation suggests the presence of some serious conceptual confusion.

Use the following cartoon to answer questions 45 and 46.

—from *What America Thinks*

45. The actions portrayed in the cartoon suggest an extreme interpretation of the interwar policy of

- **A.** deterrence
- **B.** containment
- * **C.** appeasement
- **D.** brinkmanship

46. The cynical view of the cartoonist is **most directly** communicated by his

- **A.** portrayal of the aggressor states as wolves
- * **B.** inclusion of the sign "Save the World for Democracy"
- **C.** characterization of the Great Powers as Nazi sympathizers
- **D.** representation of Czechoslovakia as the lone victim of aggression

Questions 45 and 46 were based on a historical cartoon that focussed specifically on the Munich Conference of 1938 and the pursuit of appeasement. The cartoonist's point of view is quite stark, cynical, and uncompromising in its presentation. Both questions 45 and 46 are classified as Synthesis/Evaluation questions on Topic B.

To answer questions 45 and 46 correctly, students had to demonstrate their knowledge and critical thinking skills by recognizing contextual detail and assigning this detail to a particular historical event—the key detail being that of the body labelled "Czechs" being pushed out of the sleigh. The fact that 66.2% of all students answered question 45 correctly and 59.5% answered question 46 correctly is a credit to the thinking skills of Grade 12 Alberta social studies students in their approach to demanding questions.

Interestingly, a closer statistical review of these questions reveals that of the total number of females who answered questions 45, only 58.7% answered correctly compared with 74.4% of males; however, of the total number of females who answered question 46, 58.5% answered correctly compared with 60.6% of males.

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Part B: Written Response

The results for the written-response section of the Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination are tabulated according to the percentage of students achieving each scoring level (1 to 5) in the four scoring categories. Each scoring category assesses different but interrelated expectations; consequently, individual students' scores are likely to vary from one category to another. Those students who achieve at or above the standard of excellence (80%) on the written-response section tend to have scores of **4 Proficient** or **5 Excellent** for all scoring categories. Students meeting the acceptable standard (50%) on the written-response section tend to have scores of **3 Satisfactory** or greater for most scoring categories but may produce **2 Limited** work for one or two categories.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignment and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing these results is at the **3 Satisfactory** level. The scoring guides that describe scoring criteria are in the 1997–98 *Social Studies 30 Information Bulletin*.

The written-response section contributes 30% of the total examination mark. Students are required to write one complete and unified essay in which they discuss the importance and complexity of an issue and rationally defend their position by using supportive, relevant evidence. The organization of arguments should show evidence of logical thought that should persuade the reader. Students are expected to make use of their critical and creative thinking skills to demonstrate complex and independent thought.

Part B: Written Response has a total value of 30 marks: 10 marks each for *Defence of Position* and *Quality of Examples*, and five marks each for *Exploration of the Issue* and *Quality of Language and Expression*. The average raw score mean for Part B was 17.7 out of 30. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to the provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

It should be noted that since January 1995, a two-marker system was adopted for marking Part B; this means that it is possible for students to be awarded marks that are midway between scoring criteria. (See the following table.)

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark (%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores									
		Excellent		Proficient		Satisfactory		Limited		Poor	
		5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	Ins*
Exploration of the Issue	5	2.1	4.0	10.8	13.8	26.7	20.1	16.2	4.6	1.5	0.2
Defence of Position	10	2.0	3.9	9.9	13.8	26.6	22.0	16.3	4.0	1.3	0.2
Quality of Examples	10	2.2	3.9	9.6	12.2	22.7	19.5	19.0	7.4	3.4	0.2
Quality of Language and Expression	5	3.1	4.8	13.6	17.2	39.2	15.0	5.8	0.9	0.2	0.2

* **Ins** (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded the acceptable standard. Students with scores of 4, 4.5, and/or 5 have achieved the standard of excellence.

Topic A

Some people believe that governments must ensure that all citizens have at least a minimum standard of living. Others believe that it is the responsibility of individuals to provide for their own well-being.

To what extent should governments provide for those who are unable to provide for themselves?

In your essay, take and defend a position on this issue.

Topic B

During the twentieth century, many nations have pursued foreign policies based strictly on the principle of national self-interest. Other nations have been more willing to pursue foreign policies based on principles other than those perceived to be strictly in their national self-interest.

To what extent should nations base their foreign policies on national self-interest?

In your essay, take and defend a position on this issue.

Examiners' Comments

The results of the written component for the June 1998 examination revealed an encouraging average score (17.7/30) in line with those scores achieved provincially over the last three years. These are among the highest average scores achieved since 1984; they represent growing confidence and academic rigor on the part of Alberta students in composing their responses to the writing assignment.

Many teacher-markers commented on the noticeable consistency of approach taken by many students in developing thoughtful, well-organized papers. As one marker noted, students often exhibited a "good understanding of the issue under discussion, stayed on topic, and didn't contradict themselves." As a result, and as noted in previous reports, fewer students were awarded insufficient, or poor marks.

Many students introduce well-chosen historical and contemporary examples as evidence to support their arguments and, ultimately, their positions. For example, for Topic A, many students made appropriate and detailed references to the approaches that various economic systems take to resolve the issue in question. Specific arguments and evidence included references to the harsh precepts of Social Darwinism, or to the rugged individualism and self reliance encouraged by many right wing ideologies through to the compassion found in the Swedish welfare state model, and to the extensive interventionism of the former Soviet economy. In contrast, many markers commented on the tendency of various students to conclude, in rather sweeping terms, that market-oriented economies had "too little" regard for the general well-being of all citizens, centrally planned economies had "too much," and that mixed economies had "just enough." For Topic B, many students, in offering their thoughts on the concepts of foreign policy and national self-interest, applied course content that spanned the 20th century—from aggressive national ventures during the interwar years to hostile incursions or cooperative efforts that reverberated globally throughout the Cold War period and beyond.

A number of markers commented on the continuing perception held by many students dealing with Topic A that the world operates in absolutes. For example, all citizens in a centrally planned economy feel "no initiative or motivation to work;" whereas in the capitalist United States, "the government doesn't provide anything for its citizens." A noticeable mean-spiritedness was also apparent in many papers. Some students contended that only the most desperate in society should have access to welfare. Such writers concluded that all other recipients are essentially lazy, shiftless miscreants who abuse the public's goodwill. Papers based on such simple assertions, often proclaimed at a barroom level of unsubstantiated opinion, received lower marks.

In dealing with Topic B, many students successfully developed relevant ideas, information, and detail in defending their positions. However, others chose, through extended historical or chronological overviews, to tell and describe rather than to explain and apply. Many markers also noted an interesting naivety on the part of some students who regarded the pursuit of national self-interest as entirely negative and selfish. For example, one student wrote, "the best side for a nation to take would be to not base foreign policy on national self-interest but on world peace." Thus, these students imply that for a nation to place confidence in the United Nations and collective security means moving away from any pursuit of national self-interest. Recognition of the subtleties of motivation in these instances was conceptually ignored or blurred.

Students achieving the acceptable standard were able to express an adequate understanding of the complexity and significance of an issue. These writers often recognized the principles underlying different viewpoints associated with an issue and generally established a historical or contemporary frame of reference for an issue's importance.

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Students achieving the standard of excellence perceptively investigated the complexity and significance of the issue, often throughout the fabric of their response. Such students were comfortable revealing to the reader what they genuinely thought, rather than attempting to write what they felt the reader wanted to hear.

As in previous administrations, many students demonstrated an awareness that a stronger position paper is developed by establishing a basis for each argument or reason and then applying specific historical and contemporary examples as supportive evidence for each argument. Students achieving the acceptable standard supported their position with several adequate arguments. Although these arguments lacked in elaboration and depth of understanding, they were connected to the issue under discussion and to the position taken. Supportive evidence used by these writers to bolster an argument was generally relevant but not error-free, and more often general rather than specific in presentation. Such writers, despite making minor errors, demonstrated control of the conventions of language.

Students achieving below the acceptable standard did not link their examples in a meaningful way to their positions and often exhibited vagueness and confusion with key social studies concepts. They developed evidence primarily in descriptive terms, unloading as much data as they could recall, thus exhibiting little sense of its organization and applicability. Superficial descriptions of detail and the presentation of extraneous information resulted in lower scores. Students achieving below the satisfactory level demonstrated poor control of conventions.

Students achieving the standard of excellence composed powerful and forceful arguments that were firmly rooted in the application of germane, well-chosen evidence—evidence that in many instances supported a qualified position. Students at this level wrote carefully organized essays that were essentially free from errors in mechanics and grammar.

Generally, teachers were very satisfied with the curricular fit of the two written-response questions. Based on a review of the essays submitted for the June 1998 writing of the Social Studies 30 Examination, Alberta's students have learned a great deal.

Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B

	Part A	Part B
A	25.2%	8.9%
B	30.4%	22.8%
C	27.7%	43.3%
F	16.7%	25.0%

While it is not intended that parts A and B of the examination be considered as separate examinations or that each part necessarily tests the same curricular objectives, it is interesting to see the distribution of student results.

In June 1998, considerably more students were awarded scores in the "A" category on Part A of the examination than on Part B, and considerably more students were awarded scores in the "F" category on Part B of the examination than on Part A. These scores do not signal a new phenomenon, but are consistent with results of recent administrations.

Readers are reminded that a *Samples of Student Writing* document based on essays written from the January 1995 administrations is available from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre, 12360 - 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5L 4X9, 403-427-5775 (Fax 422-9750). The order number is 308660-01 @ $4.40 per booklet.

For further information, contact Barry Jonas (bjonas@edc.gov.ab.ca) or Elana Scraba (escraba@edc.gov.ab.ca) at the Student Evaluation Branch at 427-0010. To call toll-free from outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

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